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ABSTRACT

In order to assure college fraternities their share of alumni resources at a time when colleges and universities are mounting aggressive institutional advancement activities also aimed at alumni, a model for Greek alumni relations programs is proposed. Greek associations face significant competition from the institutional advancement offices which are generally well staffed and funded and carefully organized. The characteristics of Greek alumni are diverse but they do share a tendency to be institutional donors and active alumni volunteers. A five step model for improving a Greek chapter's alumni relations programs includes: (1) keeping independent records on past alumni; (2) keeping open lines of communication with alumni and with other sources of information; (3) sharing information about the effectiveness of alumni involvement; (4) giving alumni an opportunity to make regular gifts; and (5) getting national headquarters support. Implementation of the model requires a strong records management philosophy which involves constant upgrading and a commitment to respecting each alumnus. These activities can feed into the efforts to maintain open lines of communication and disseminating information about the chapter's programs which can be followed by encouraging regular gift giving. The support and encouragement of the national headquarters personnel can help with defining alumni population, timing mail appeals and finding lost alumni. Over 30 references are included. (JB)

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Model for Greek Alumni Relations Programs: A Five Step Approach

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Abstract

Colleges and universities have taken a more aggressive role in institutional advancement activities. As these efforts are increased, the college fraternity's potential for success in alumni programming is decreased. Research has indicated that alumni from Greek organizations are more active and give more than non-Greek alumni. In order to assure the college fraternity of it's share of alumni resources, this model has been developed.

The major components for this model are focused around cooperation with current institutional advancement personnel, communication with alumni, and program implementation.

Introduction

Throughout the history of Greek-letter organizations, alumni support has played a variety of important roles. Alumni were once, and to some extent still are, powerful in selecting and recommending prospective fraternity and sorority members. At one period in history, during an era of informal alumni solicitations, individual chapter success was determined largely by the strength of the house's alumni body. Alumni were responsible for the physical house, financial aid for chapter members, and of course, in developing and implementing social and community endeavors.

Unfortunately, this world of idyllic alumni involvement has become a complex industry both on and off campus. As fraternities and sororities move toward the year 2000, they must compete for alumni resources along with alumni associations, development offices and foundations, the non-profit community (i.e. the "third sector") and even the chapter's national headquarters. These efforts combined to raise over $100 billion for all of philanthropy in 1988 (Goss, 1989). While many alumni offices have been more than cooperative in developing specific alumni programs for Greek chapters, such as reunions and homecoming activities, it is rare for a development office to take a similar stance when soliciting gifts. Common are specific institutional guidelines which prohibit the solicitation of alumni by any organization other than the institution's development office, and thus, most development officers will not disclose an alumnus' giving history or related

development research and solicitation strategy.

These comments were not intended to condemn institutional development offices or foundations, but rather, to help define how fraternities and sororities can take the initiative in guaranteeing their "right" to alumni resources, both financial and in terms of volunteer time. In establishing these parameters for this evidently uphill struggle for Greek chapters, difficulties must be identified, examined, and worked into advantages for the benefit of the chapter. Attention must also be given to current alumni demographic information which will help provide the base for the five step model for a more successful Greek alumni relations and development program.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Making it Work

College fraternities and sororities will continue to face a variety of challenges in the decade of the 1990's. Alcohol, drug use and abuse, sexist behavior, and hazing have continued to plague individual chapters with stereotypical images. These images have prompted reform from administrators and the campus community, while reform efforts from national fraternity offices continue to work through problems, such as declining membership which arose in the 1970's and 1980's. While these are serious problems, they must be divorced from the chapter's advancement program. More attention from the delegated fraternity or sorority member responsible for fund raising and alumni relations must be given to professionalism, expenditures, and the definition of goals for the alumni program.

First, much like a political third party, fraternities and sororities face an institution in and of itself: the institutional advancement offices. Educational fund raising alone raised over $8.2 billion in 1988 (Bailey, 1989), and this growth has lead to the creation of summer institutes for fund raising, fund raiser certification, alumni volunteer management seminars, publications workshops, and continuing education programs, just to name a few. Over $100 billion was raised for all of philanthropy and the implications for the Greek chapter are devastating, forcing fraternity or sorority officers to face an entire front of professionals consisting of fund raisers, alumni officers, event organizers, and publication editors, competing for chapter alumni support (See Figure 1). With a clear disadvantage, the student charged with advancement must 'make the best' of this disadvantage by utilizing these staff members as resource depositories of "how-to's," program evaluators, sources of literature, techniques, and even in selected instances, a source of possible joint funding.

The second, and perhaps most distinct, disadvantage has been identified in terms of alumni relation program budgets. Most fraternities and sororities would be fortunate to budget several hundred dollars for a semester's worth of alumni programs, while literally hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent annually on the institution's advancement programs. An institution's phonathon budget alone is often more than likely to double the amount any one fraternity or sorority will spend on an alumni program in the course of a year.

Sizable budgets allow the university to publish elaborate campaign literature, send personalized letters to thousands of alumni and friends of the institution, comprehensive volunteer training, and allows for the university to cultivate potential major donors, all regardless of Greek affiliation. These cultivation practices are not limited to free lunches and dinners, but at least one institution holds retreats for potential donors, flying them across the country to visit with and "learn" from other volunteers who have committed financially to the institution. What the institutional advancement offices lack, however, are the memories of college life and the unique experiences offered by Greek membership; that is, an acute form of affinity. With this in mind, the chapter must not try to compete with the institutional advancement offices dollar-for-dollar or contact-for-contact, but rather, chapter's must concentrate and capitalize on the past, reminding alumni of friendships, homecomings, formals, and other experiences to lure alumni into the role of a volunteer. Old yearbooks, composite pictures, and pledge paddles reminiscent of college life can often do more than a dinner with an institutionally-trained volunteer.

The greatest disadvantage facing Greek chapters, however, has to do with the setting of goals, desired activities, and technology. Institutional advancement offices possess clearly defined goals and objectives, and revolve activities around meeting these goals. Virtually all fund raising programs utilize giving clubs to recognize donors and upgrade them to a higher giving

level. Alumni offices tend to take the role of the cultivator, reminding the alumnus of the college experience and ensuring that dealings with the institution are positive. Publication offices produce the literature of how a gift will benefit the school, create recognition devices, such as an honor roll of donors, and see that the institution is kept before the eyes of the alumnus. The development office, then, takes on the role of the solicitor, capitalizing on the other divisions' work, and producing a contribution. Greek chapters in the past have taken the attitude that alumni are crucial only for a reunion weekend, alumni picnic, or homecoming. An occasional request for financial support, through a non-personalized photocopied letter, sets the norm and exemplifies the sophistication and respect given to Greek alumni by many individual chapters.

Greek chapters, however, can learn from their institutional advancement partners' actions, downsize the institution's concepts to fit the chapter's size and needs, and above all else, implement them. Alumni should not be called upon once a year for attendance at homecoming, but should fit into a somewhat intricate structure of volunteerism with the potential to take on more responsibility. A reading of the alumni or development office's mission statement is the first step in developing a successful fund raising program, and copying the fund raising "technologies" of the development office will net positive results.

With these challenges, and within these structural parameters, the goal of a positive and successful Greek alumni relations

program is to involve and solicit successfully the chapter's alumni. The observations and model provided here have been derived from a variety of practical and workable programs in a number of colleges and universities and fraternities and sororities around the country. The key to making any alumni relations program work, however, is not in simply following tradition or developing policy, but in the program's quality implementation.

Greek Alumni: What is Known

The concept of a comprehensive demographic charting of all Greek alumni is, at this point, an unrealistic project for one main reason: uniqueness of chapters. One of the greatest advantages of the Greek system in America is the diversity of each chapter and the individuals within each chapter. While a demographic report card of Greek alumni donors or volunteers is a reality in the not very distant future, the approximately 5 million former undergraduate Greeks are an unknown population except to the chapters from which they hail.

What is known about these Greek alumni has been theorized by many, and the results tend to illustrate that they are institutional donors. Studies and responses by practitioners in development and student affairs reflect that students who were active on campus, especially those who were members of Greek chapters, are more likely to be alumni donors and active alumni volunteers than their non-Greek counterparts. In accepting this theory, the potential for a successful Greek alumni relations

program is greatly improved. The commitment of Greek chapters to philanthropic causes has also been a factor leading to the Greek population's commitment to their alma mater. Concerning involvement, a number of studies have attempted to find and define this relationship between Greek involvement on campus and alumni donor status.

Nelson (1985) attempted to define the characteristics of alumni donors at Indiana University-Bloomington by surveying 932 alumni donors. Using alumni from 1949 to 1974, he found that 56 percent of the donors were members of Greek letter organizations and lived in fraternity and sorority houses. A total of 72 percent of the respondents were involved with some type of extracurricular activity, and 85 percent of those respondents held leadership positions.

Previously at Indiana University, the Indiana Alumni Magazine (Indiana University Alumni Association, 1969) reported a study of donors who gave $5,000 or more a year. The study reported that 75 percent of these major donors were involved with a Greek letter organization on campus, 15 of the last 18 annual giving chairpersons had involvement with a fraternity or sorority, and all 21 of the IU Foundation's Board of Directors were involved with fraternities and sororities as undergraduates.

Baughman (1958) found similar results when reviewing New York University alumni data. Of NYU's entire alumni population of over 200,000, 90 percent of all the contributions received were from the six percent of the alumni body that had been involved with

fraternities and sororities. Although with differing percentages, the same results were found at the University of Michigan (Morris, 1970). In studying 280 potential and 280 actual $10,000 donors, Morris found that donors were significantly more involved with student organizations while on campus, especially involved with fraternities and sororities.

What Influences Giving

The history of educational fund raising as "in-kind" contributions have been recorded as early as Plato, when lands were donated for his academy (Wood, 1989). The process of giving, however, did not become formalized until the twelfth century in Europe, as both cash, equipment, and other in-kind gifts were used to help open and sustain new educational institutions (Haskins, 1957; Wieruszowski, 1966). Giving to education in the United States arose out of financial distress for colleges and universities (Curti & Nash, 1965; Maxwell, 1965), and with current state and federal financing trends which fail to keep pace with inflation (McMillen, 1989), a continued need for fund raising is a reality.

There have been a number of studies, dating as far back as 1958, which have attempted to identify why donors give. Several of these studies have found undergraduate involvement to be a factor in an alumnus' decision to give (Baughman, 1958; Tyus, 1958; Indiana Alumni Magazine, 1969; Gardner, 1975; Nelson, 1984; McNally, 1984; Dietz, 1985; Hammersmith , 1985; Haddad, 1986),

while other studies have found relationships between giving and obligation to society (O'Connor, 1961), attitudes about the institution (Hall, 1967; Chewning, 1984: Korvas, 1984), participation in alumni activities (Caruthers, 1971), loyalty (Dove, 1987), other voluntary organization participation (Markoff, 1978), self esteem and altruism (Anderson, 1981), and the economy (Leslie, Drachman, Conrad, & Ramey, 1983; Leslie & Ramey, 1985). Other studies found differing results for participation in student activities (Miller, 1988), while even additional efforts have focused on demographic variables (Spaeth & Greeley, 1970; Belcher, 1988), fund raising office procedures, practices (Wolshon, 1981), and structures (Paton, 1982).

While findings from the studies mentioned were unique to higher education, Brakeley (1980) felt that donors give for one of four reasons: to gain a sense of belonging, feeling of social responsibility, self appreciation, and to gain peer approval. Hedgepeth's (1985) work followed a similar philosophy. He contended that an individual initially gives to feel a sense of affiliation, but increases giving to feel achievement and empowerment. As the need for external funding grows, the understanding of these and other factors which influence an individual's decision to give grow increasingly important (**Figure** 2.).

Model

In addition to the disadvantages and observations relating to the tendency of Greek alumni to give, the potential effectiveness of the chapter's alumni relations program can be greatly improved by working to implement the following five-step model (**Figure 3.**).

1. **Keep independent records**. While the institution is likely to have a more comprehensive collection of data on individual alumni, the Greek chapter should maintain its own set of records. Included in these records should be basic information such as address, marital status, year of graduation, and major, "big brother" or "big sister" while in the house, occupation, contacts with other alumni, correspondence, favorite faculty member, etc. A possible way to start files of this nature is for graduating seniors to start their own records before they leave campus, indicating satisfaction with education, permanent home address, and some of the other items previously mentioned.

2. **Open lines of communication**. Very often, individual chapters feel that they are alone in their pursuit of a more perfect alumni program. Answers to puzzling questions or dilemmas may often be found on campus from the institutional advancement offices and other fraternities and sororities. An often overlooked source of answers is found by simply asking alumni about their preferences. What types of programs do they want for homecoming or reunion weekends? Alumni surveys can be useful in determining

this type of feedback, but do not forget monthly or bi-monthly newsletters which keep alumni up to date with thoughts, trends, and programming patterns. An open call for suggestions from alumni should be standard.

3. Illustrate the effectiveness of alumni involvement. Alumni relations is an area that can often induce paranoia, simply because of the lack of understanding as to what the program can do and how simple good constituent relations practices guarantee success. As the chapter experiences success, share the victory stories with all the chapter members. Reading letters from alumni at chapter meetings, inviting alumni to speak, and making evident use of alumni contributions are all ideas for making the success of alumni relations evident. Be sure to share the involvement of selected alumni with other chapter graduates. Many alumni may seem apprehensive to get involved with activities due to the lack of familiarity with what other alumni have done.

4. Give alumni an opportunity to make regular gifts. Instead of sporadic letters begging for money, establish a regular opportunity for alumni to give. Developing a multi-year timeline outlining when solicitation letters will go out can help the process. Some chapters have had great success by timing mail appeals to arrive in the alumnus' hands before other known charity drives. There is a great deal of literature on the methods and formats for writing successful direct mail appeals, and turning to these references in the school's library can help in effective letter writing.

5. Get national headquarter support. Many national fraternities and sororities have had national headquarters for a number of years, and in the process, these organizations have acquired a great deal of information which may prove to be valuable to individual chapters. These offices usually can provide the chapter with a list of initiates, pin numbers, and addresses. A national magazine provided by a national office provides an excellent opportunity for publicity and announcements for alumni activities. Some headquarters have also developed foundations to help collect and disperse money from alumni, and if approached properly, these foundations may be able to provide financial support for housing or events.

Model Implementation

This model, a proto-type, was derived from fraternities and sororities on various college campuses, and through the analysis of several college development programs. This model is based on a strong records management philosophy which requires not only a certain degree of independence from all other sources, but constant renovation and upgrading of alumni information. The management of the names and addresses must include searching for 'lost' addresses, adding spouse, title, middle initial, etc. to each record. Each alumnus must be treated with respect, and this respect should be transmitted through records management (i.e. taking great care to assure proper spelling of names).

The on-going list improvement fits into the second and third components of the model: open lines of communication and the illustration of alumni involvement. Alumni are often the best source to turn to for their college classmate's addresses, and they simply need be asked for the information, creating a sense of affiliation and involvement. By illustrating that alumni respond to these requests and that they are involved in a positive experience, this involvement can serve as a source of motivation for chapter members in searching for 'lost' alumni (a frustrating and time consuming activity) and remove apprehensions of disclosing the location of fellow alumni. The components are best utilized, however, in their application to making alumni feel comfortable in their dealings with current actives and the chapter in general.

When the second and third components are effectively implemented, giving alumni the opportunity to make regular gifts should be a natural expansion of step two, open lines of communication. An annual solicitation accompanied by an invitation to homecoming or with a chapter newsletter takes away the harshness of a lone request for money. Appeals should be timed according to events, other charity drives, and with the alumnus' best interests in mind, such as avoiding times of known large expenditures like the holiday season.

If at all possible, the support and encouragement of national headquarter personnel is helpful in defining an alumni population, timing mail appeals, and among other things, finding lost alumni. A national office is also a resource for what other chapters have

found to be successful in different parts of the country, and how others have taken on the problems of alumni relations. Getting the national office's approval to raise money from alumni should be checked into, as some Greek chapters are restricted from the fund raising process unless related to a particular philanthropy.

Summary

The model presented here is based on the structures and practices of several different Greek alumni relations programs, and advocates an integration of efforts with existing institutional advancement offices. By opening lines of communication on campus, new strategies and techniques can be introduced into fraternity and sorority alumni programs. By opening lines of communication with alumni, the chapter's graduates can be given the opportunity to become involved and reestablish their affiliation with the chapter. Prior to expanding these efforts to fund raising activities, however, specific institutional and national chapter guidelines which may impede fund raising should be explored.

As with all Greek chapters, no model or theory can work without implementation. The adviser and chapter officers must take responsibility in seeing that each element of communication is done tastefully, and most of all, that it is done on a regular basis. This model can not guarantee the acquisition of more financial resources, but it can promise stronger fraternal bonds for the brethren which have left campus, and that may be a greater reward than money.

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Figure 1

Typical Agencies Competing for Philanthropic Money

United Way	4-H Development Foundation
Religious Organizations (such as the church)	Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts
Health Care Organizations	YWCA/YMCA
Homes for Children	Wildlife Organizations
League of Human Decency	Environmental Organizations
Community Agencies	United Negro College Fund
National Arbor Day Foundation	National Service Organizations
Public Television	Theaters
Planned Parenthood	Museums
Salvation Army	Association for Retarded Citizens
	Public Radio

Figure 2

Factors Influencing Giving

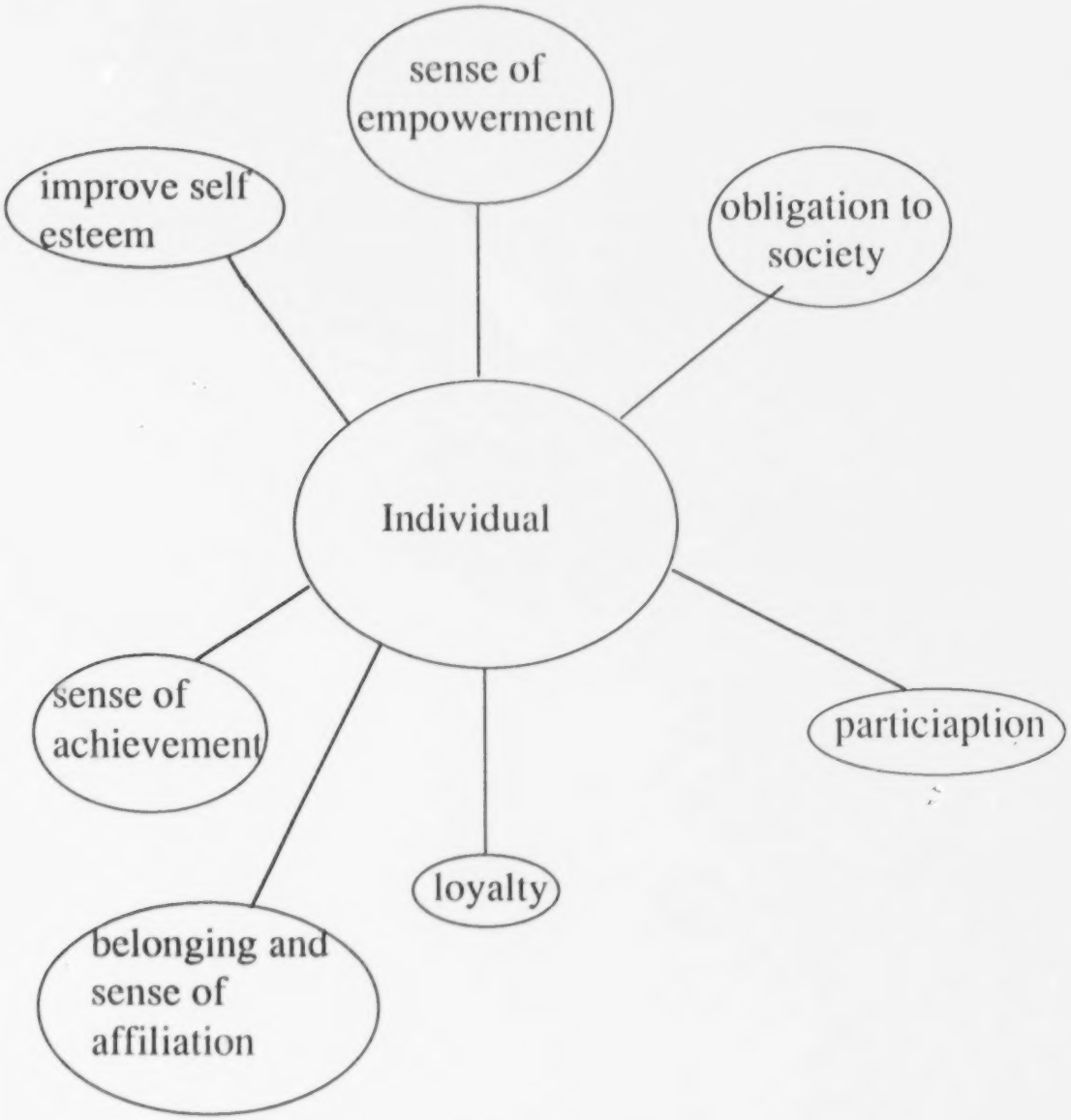
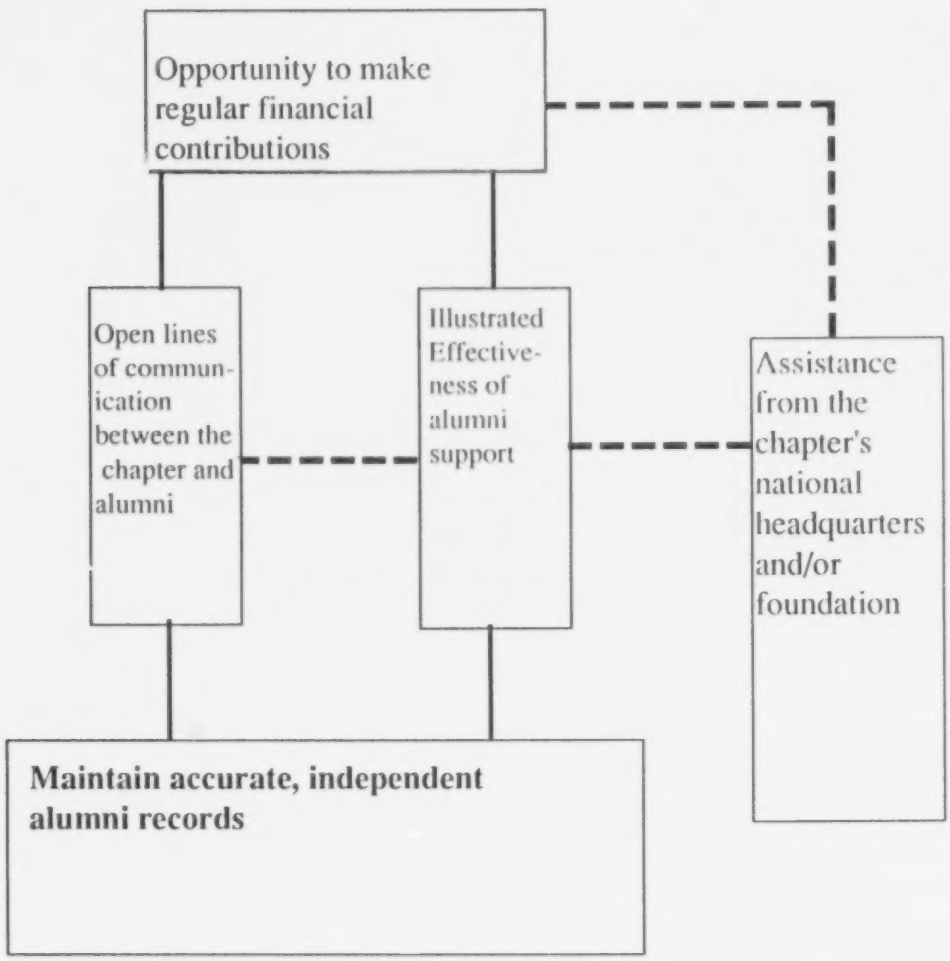


Figure 3

Five Step Model for Greek Alumni Programs


Opportunity to make regular financial contributions
Open lines of communication between the chapter and alumni
Illustrated Effectiveness of alumni support
Assistance from the chapter's national headquarters and/or foundation
Maintain accurate, independent alumni records